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Central Intelligence Agency



Washington, D.C. 20505

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DIRECTORATE OF INTELLIGENCE

25 August 1989

China's Military: Fragile Unity in the Wake of Crisis [REDACTED]

Summary

A comprehensive review of the events of this past spring indicates that China's paramount military leader Deng Xiaoping needed [REDACTED] to convince regional military commanders to intervene decisively and crush the prodemocracy movement in Beijing. The commanders' reluctance to act suggests that--despite statements of unity--there are deep divisions within the military and Deng can count on the undivided loyalty of very few officers. Deng appears unsure of his support and is moving to reassert his authority while President Yang Shangkun and Defense Minister Qin Jiwei vie to build their own bases of power in the military. [REDACTED]

We believe that the struggle for influence in the military will intensify and that it may be affecting Beijing's stance regarding the future of suspended FMS programs. President Yang Shangkun, for example, may view any compromise on China's part as undercutting his attempts to win

This memorandum was prepared by [REDACTED] Office of East Asian Analysis, and [REDACTED] Office of Leadership Analysis. Information available as of 24 August 1989 was used in its preparation. Comments and queries are welcome and may be directed to the Chief, [REDACTED] OEA, [REDACTED]

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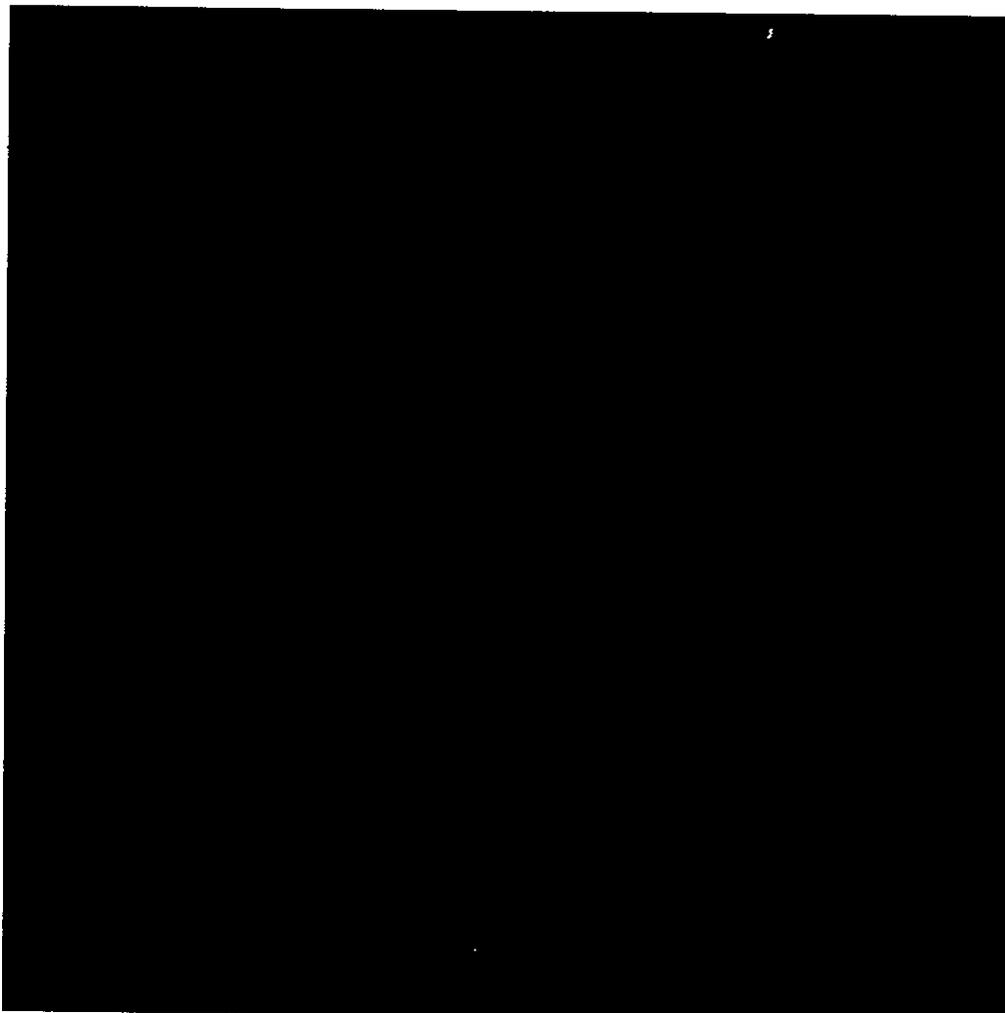
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support from hardliners. Deng Xiaoping, on the other hand, may believe
his position requires a quick solution to the impasse with Washington.



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In our judgment, the reluctance of key military figures to support the imposition of martial law arose from one or more factors:

- The reluctance of regional commanders to reentangle the Army in domestic politics. Virtually all of the military region commanders were selected by Deng precisely because they are professional soldiers dedicated to military modernization and to reducing the overarching roles in political, social, and economic affairs that the People's Liberation Army assumed during the Cultural Revolution (1966-76). Military commanders also, in our judgment, understood that the use of the army as an instrument of social control in Beijing would almost certainly tarnish the Army's popular image and constitute an open-ended commitment to suppressing outbreaks of civil unrest in the future.
- A concern that the martial law declaration was a ploy by Premier Li Peng and President Yang Shangkun to stage a coup against General Secretary Zhao Ziyang. Yang's longstanding animosity for Zhao was well known in the military, which had seen him chafe at Zhao's appointment as the second-ranking member of the Military Affairs Commission--outranking Yang. Immediately following the imposition of martial law, numerous rumors circulating in the capital alleged that Deng had become mentally unstable, ill, or had even died. These rumors almost certainly fueled suspicions within the military that Yang and Li were manipulating the aging leader or issuing orders under his name.
- Uncertainty over the outcome of the leadership struggle between Zhao and Deng Xiaoping. As the antigovernment demonstrations grew, the battle for power between Deng and Zhao intensified.

[REDACTED] We believe that some commanders withheld their support until it became clear that Deng would retain control, and it was not until 3 June--after the politics of civilian leadership were sorted out--that the crackdown was implemented.

- The influence of leading active and retired military figures over military region commanders and the commanders of the General Staff and General Logistics Departments. Several key senior military figures [REDACTED]

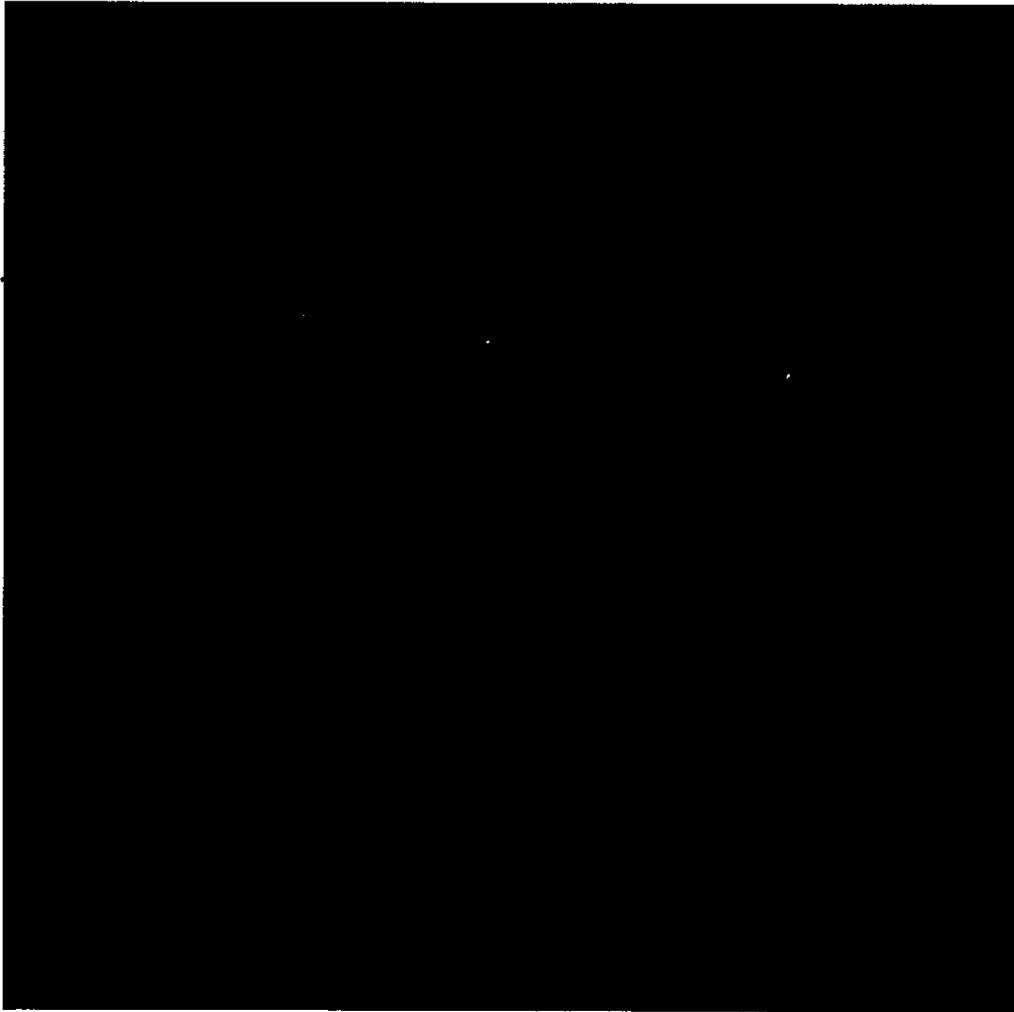
[REDACTED] adamantly opposed the use of the military against the students. We think they balked either because they wanted to protect the Army's prestige, or because they supported Zhao and distrusted Yang Shangkun and Li Peng. [REDACTED]

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Struggle for Control of the Guns

Deng remains the keystone to military cohesion, but the fissures within the military evident during the crisis demonstrate that, despite recent statements of unity, he can count on the unqualified support of few military officers. [redacted]

[redacted] In addition, Deng's absence from public view since 9 June--while not unprecedented--has sparked new speculation in China that age and increasing infirmity have diminished his control over the military. This perception almost certainly has intensified antagonisms engendered by the crackdown and fueled maneuvering among senior officers for positions of influence. [redacted]

Deng may have difficulty deciding which of the prime challengers to his influence--President Yang Shangkun or Defense Minister Qin Jiwei--represents the greater threat. He probably is most wary of President Yang, who is generally recognized as the second most powerful figure in China today. Yang is a formidable contender for the loyalties of the military--albeit with some definite liabilities. As Permanent Vice Chairman of the Military Affairs Commission, he exercises day-to-day control over the military. [redacted]



[redacted] Yang, moreover, apparently enjoys the support of elderly party hardliners and conservative military figures, many of whom have returned to prominence with the fall of Zhao. [redacted]

Although Yang has never been a combat commander, he is a shrewd political tactician. Yang, for example, never accepted Deng's appointment of Zhao to the Military Affairs Commission, and worked diligently to prevent Zhao from developing support within the armed services. Yang also is not blind to Deng's political machinations. [redacted]



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The Role of the Venerated Elders

A group of aging and retired officers who command tremendous respect within China's defense community and who continue to advise the Military Affairs Commission (MAC) on national security affairs will play a major role in the struggle for influence. In our judgment, many of these officers oppose Yang Shangkun, and we expect they will use their prestige to undermine his authority. The most prominent of these senior opponents probably include:

Deputy Secretary General of the MAC Hong Xuezhi, [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] a longtime Deng ally, Hong resurfaced shortly after the crackdown began and retains his post on the Commission.

Former Defense Minister Zhang Alping is widely respected in the defense science and technology community. [REDACTED]

Yang Dezhi, a former Chief of Staff, [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

National Defense University Political Commissar Li Desheng oversees senior officer political training and may be another potent opponent of Yang Shangkun. Li served as commander of Shenyang Military Region for more than 12 years and almost certainly retains the loyalty of officers who served under him.⁵ Li has never been a Yang supporter. [REDACTED]

⁵ Among those who served in the Shenyang Military Region under Li are Lanzhou commander Zhao Xiangshun, Shenyang commander Liu Jingsong, Shenyang political commissar Song Keda, Beijing political commissar Liu Zhenhua, and Nanjing political commissar Fu Kuiqing. In addition, General Logistics Department director Zhao Nanqi also served under Li. [REDACTED]

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Yang Shangkun's central role in the Tiananmen crackdown, however, apparently is seen by his detractors as the Achilles heel of his political ascent. In the wake of the assault on Tiananmen Square, reports swept the capital that the 27th Group Army--allegedly commanded by Yang's nephew--was solely responsible for the bloodletting, and Yang's opponents are likely to keep these tales alive.³ These allegations are almost certainly attempts by political opponents to tar the "Yang family" and rumors continue to abound that Yang will be forced into retirement because of his newly attained infamy. [REDACTED]

Combat Veteran Qin Jiwei

We believe Defense Minister Qin Jiwei is the most important rival to President Yang Shangkun's bid to secure the loyalties of the Chinese Army in anticipation of a succession struggle after Deng dies. [REDACTED]

According to the Hong Kong press, the Military Affairs Commission met in early August to nominate candidates for First Vice Chairman, a post vacated by the political demise of Zhao Ziyang. Defense Minister Qin allegedly led the opposition of some military region commanders to Yang's appointment, with Deng remaining noncommittal. After the meeting collapsed in heated argument, Qin and the commanders reportedly were detained by troops loyal to Yang. But Chinese television on 19 August showed Qin--along with Yang and most other senior leaders--at the funeral of a retired general, apparently belying rumors of the Defense Minister's arrest. [REDACTED]

Qin and Yang have long been at odds, and the feud intensified two years ago [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] Qin almost certainly exercises enormous influence over the Beijing Military Region--which he commanded for eight years-- [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] Qin has longstanding ties to Deng, however, and his reappearance in early June suggests Deng ordered his release to help balance Yang's growing influence. Chinese press coverage suggests Deng further bolstered Qin's stature last month by appointing him to the Standing Committee of the Military Affairs Commission. [REDACTED]

³ Although the 27th Army did play a major role in the massacre in Beijing, elements of at least six other armies also contributed to the heavy civilian casualties. [REDACTED]

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US Foreign Military Sales to China

The US suspension of military trade with China, enacted on 5 June, affected four ongoing FMS programs worth some \$600 million:

F-8-II fighter avionics upgrade (\$502 million)

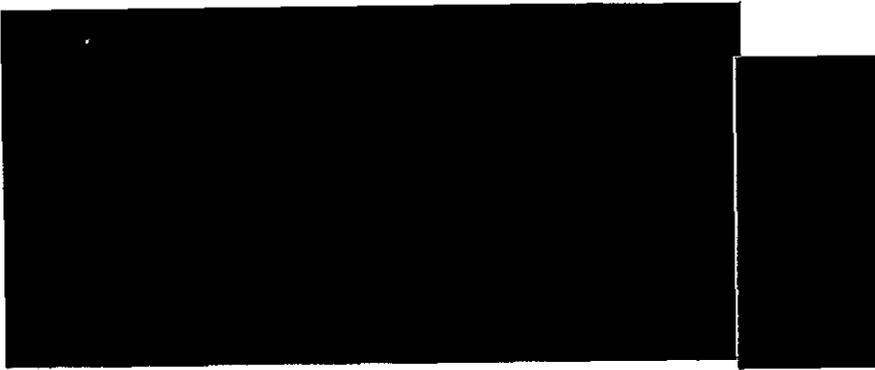
The "Peace Pearl" program provides engineering support to integrate US flight control, radars, and weapons management equipment into Chinese interceptors. Beijing agreed to purchase 55 avionics packages with projected initial deliveries in 1992.

Large Caliber Artillery Modernization Program (\$28 million)

The United States is assisting Chinese artillery ammunition factories by providing improved manufacturing methods and transferring production capability for two types of US 155mm artillery fuses. One production line is already installed.

AN/TPQ-37 Artillery Locating Radar (\$63 million)

Two of the mobile radars--used to pinpoint enemy artillery positions--were delivered in May 1988 and are being used by the Chinese for familiarization and crew training. Two additional radars were scheduled to be delivered next year.



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China's civilian leadership is dominated by an uncertain coalition of mutually suspicious octogenarians--none of whom have enough political clout to attain supremacy. We judge that Deng is well aware that the battle for influence over the Chinese military has become critical, and we expect him to try to move decisively. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] Wholesale changes in the military command structure would strongly signal that Deng is uncomfortable with Yang's strength and suspicious of support for Yang among party hardliners who have long opposed Deng's reform programs. Press accounts suggest that Deng is planning to abolish the post of First Vice Chairman of the Military Commission, or simply leave it unfilled, to end the bickering over who should receive the appointment. [REDACTED]

Even if Deng is able to effect the changes, we expect the jockeying for influence in the military to intensify. Deng's physical frailty and his political vulnerability in the wake of the crackdown have led political and military leaders to question his authority and right to lead China. Moreover, the abolition of the First Vice Chairmanship could galvanize behind Qin Jiwei, at least temporarily, those in the party and military opposed to Yang Shangkun. Yang, as Permanent Vice Chairman, is the de facto successor to Deng on the Military Affairs Commission unless other changes are implemented. Regional military commanders are important players in these struggles and--even if loyal to Deng today--would be subject to heavy lobbying in Beijing as party and military leaders maneuver in anticipation of Deng's death or incapacitation. Alliances formed, however, are likely to be highly fragile and secretive as individual commanders try to anticipate who will win the party struggles in Beijing--some may pledge loyalty and then simply choose to sit out the political battles. [REDACTED]

Implications for the United States

The dynamics of the struggle for influence in the military are almost certain to complicate Sino-US relations. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] the current dispute over the future of US Foreign Military Sales programs with China is probably compounded by the domestic infighting. Yang Shangkun, for example, has traditionally shown strong support for Sino-US military ties. But--at a time when he is trying to strengthen his political position--he may well wish to burnish his hardline credentials by taking a tough

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stance against yielding any ground to the United States on the suspension of US military transfer programs. [REDACTED]

By contrast, Deng and perhaps Defense Minister Qin Jiwei may see advantage in quickly salvaging US-China military relations. Deng has found limited military links with the United States an extremely useful counterweight to Moscow and may calculate that China's leverage with Gorbachov will diminish if FMS programs collapse. He may also believe that the demise of FMS cooperation would make it almost impossible to renew Sino-US military ties in the future, because hardliners would portray Washington's actions as reminiscent of the abrupt cutoff of Soviet military assistance in the early 1960s. [REDACTED]

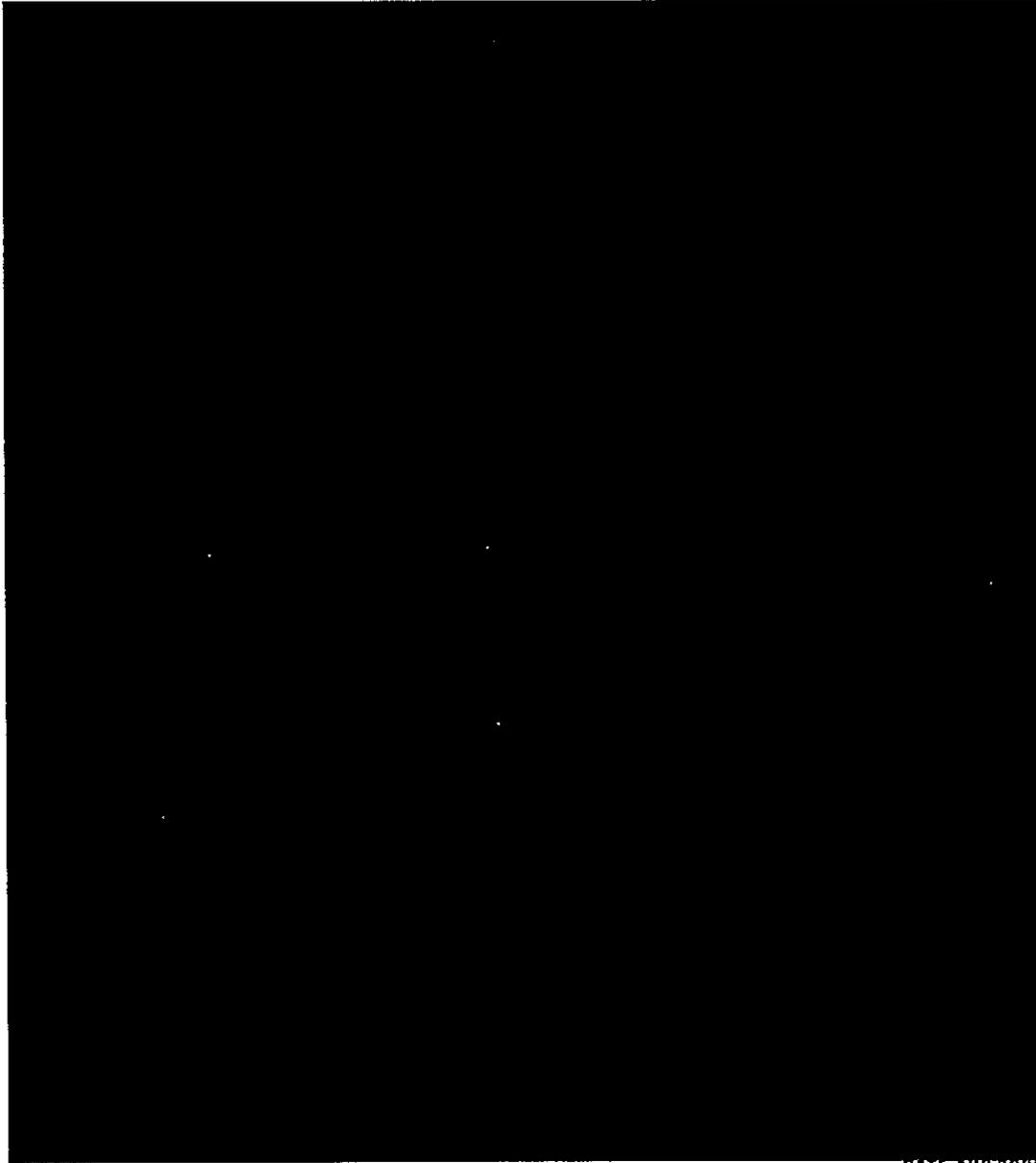
Deng may also calculate that hardliners would use the failure to reach agreement as an example of Deng's flawed policy decisions. We expect some hardliners would argue that Deng made a major error in reliance on the United States, in the first place, for modernization of China's fighter aircraft and might move to manipulate the issue to weaken support for Deng within the military. Hardliners are already blaming the United States for the rise of the prodemocracy movement and attacking Zhao Ziyang and the reformers for being enamored with Western thoughts and achievements. They almost certainly would step up their attempts to have a reconsideration of China's tilt toward the West. With the FMS issue prominent at this critical juncture in Chinese domestic politics, the United States is likely to find that tentative agreements unravel easily and Beijing lashes out harshly and in ways that appear excessive. [REDACTED]

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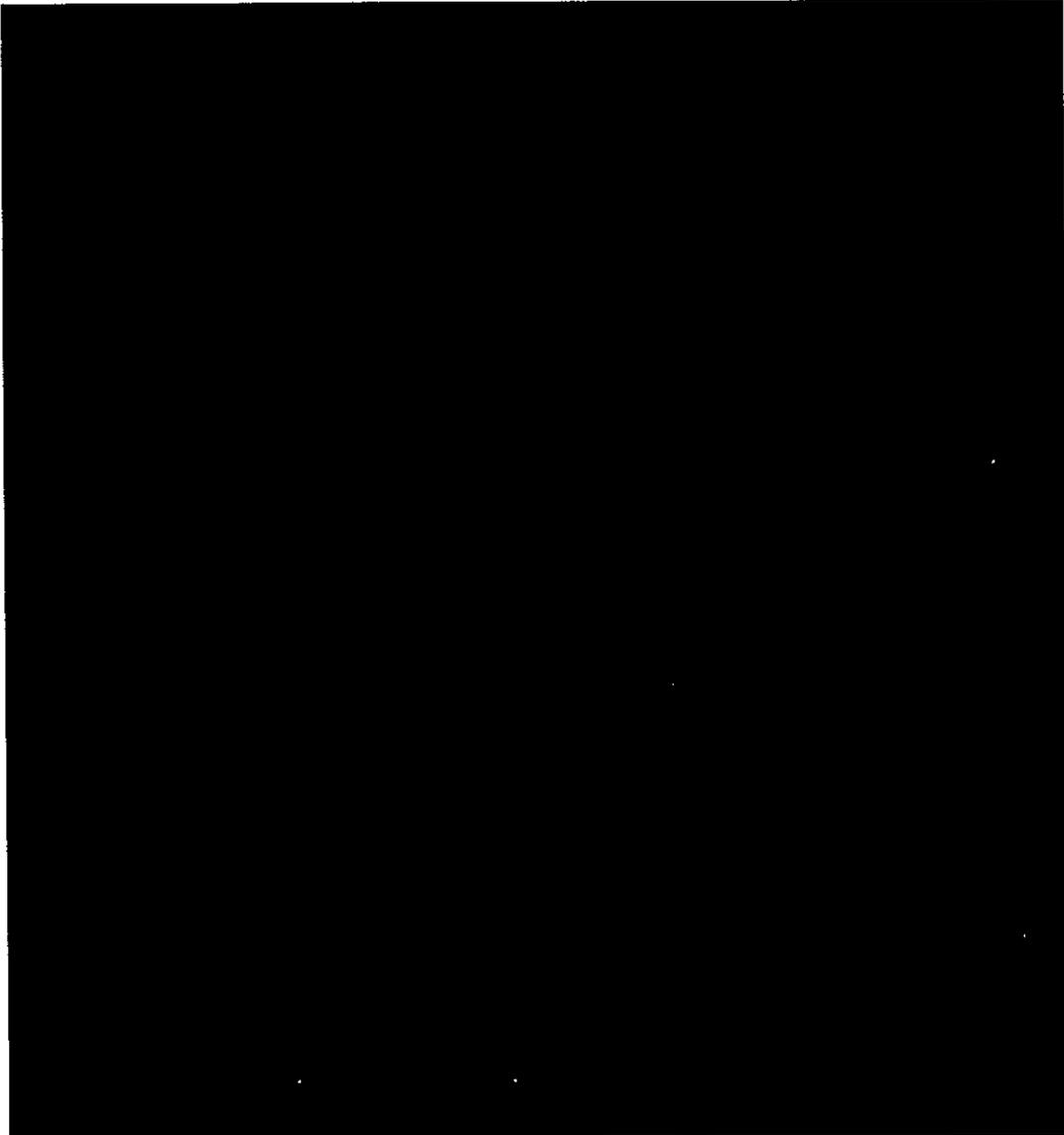
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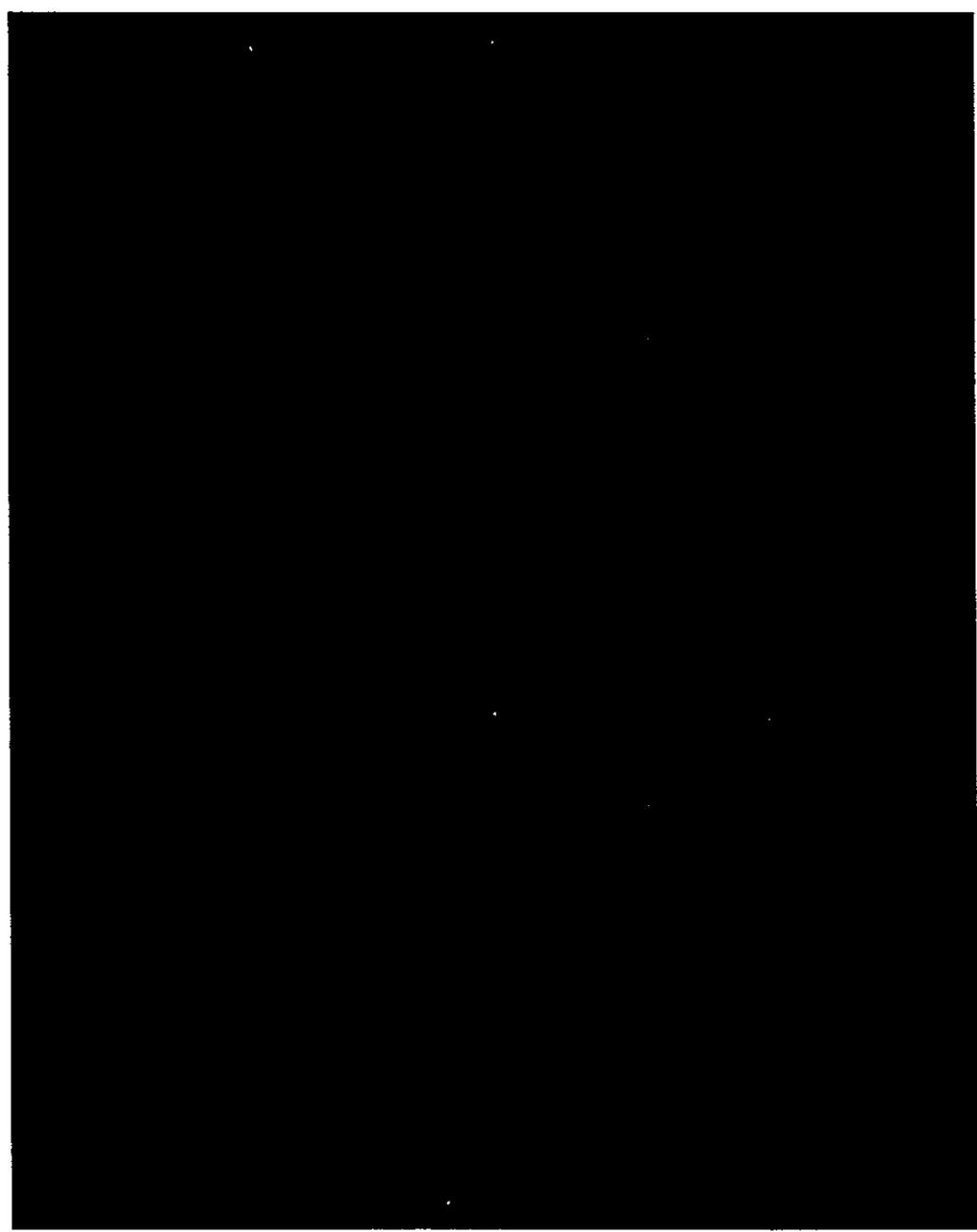


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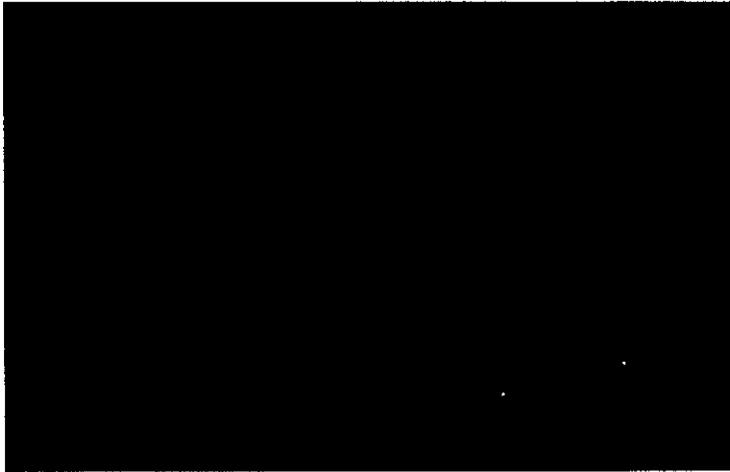


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